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ABSTRACT

This study offers an insight into how young people from England and the United States view their future employment prospects and appreciate the values and prestige of certain occupations within their national economies. The study is based upon the responses to a questionnaire by 68 U.S. high school students and 80 high school students from the United Kingdom. The four-page questionnaire focused on topics relating to teenage views of the economy, their economic involvement within it, and their perceptions of economic issues such as employment and wealth. The paper reports responses to questions relating to entering the job market and ideas on employment. Most students surveyed anticipated entering higher education, starting work in their early twenties, and accepting a job particularly well regarded by society. For example, popular choices from students living on both sides of the Atlantic were professions such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, and engineers. Few students in either nation demonstrated a particular respect for high-tech jobs or a desire to enter into professions related to technology, industry, or manufacturing. By limiting their focus to traditional occupations, students will miss out on both the opportunities and the demands for highly educated workers in technological and scientific areas. This limitation of focus to traditional occupations is an important implication for the national and international economies. (EH)

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COMPARATIVE TEENAGE EMPLOYMENT ASPIRATIONS IN ENGLAND AND THE UNITED STATES

by

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INTRODUCTION

Previous studies by the researchers (Sweeney, Foster, Trask Cardenas, 1995; Foster and Sweeney, 1995) suggest that very little is known about the economic beliefs, responsibilities, and values of American teenagers. Equally revealing a review of the research literature indicates that, despite the existence of comparative statistical data, there is a paucity of information on the understandings, responsibilities, and economic values of teenagers from an international perspective. On the limited occasions when comparative research on teenagers has been conducted few studies take into account what the teenagers themselves say about their personal understandings of, and interaction with, their economic systems.

This lack of information is regrettable in view of the fact that teenagers in countries throughout the world play an important role in their national economies and will, in the future, become the primary influences in shaping the social, political, and economic forces affecting their countries' destiny. This study, by soliciting comments from teenagers in the United Kingdom and the United States, offers an insight into how young people from two different cultures both view their future employment prospects and appreciate the value and prestige of certain occupations within their national economies.

BACKGROUND and RATIONALE:

As the people of the world move into the twenty-first century the development of international communication, trade, and travel have never been more pronounced. As a result of this explosion in technology and commercial enterprise the world has become increasingly interdependent and today, perhaps as in no other time in history, the importance of economic understanding between citizens in differing countries is of value.

The relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States is a particularly interesting one. Historical links predate the American Revolution of 1776 and the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) have continued to enjoy close cultural, diplomatic, political, and economic links for more than two centuries. In this century, the two nations have maintained particularly strong relations. United as military allies in both World War I and World War II, as founding members of the United Nations, and as partners in NATO they have long exhibited a "special relationship" in foreign affairs. The United States and the United Kingdom also hold responsibility as two of the five permanent members of the UN security council. In recent years, they often have demonstrated common international interests through involvement in major world events such as the "Gulf War" and the conflict in Bosnia.

Links between the United States and the United Kingdom also extend to the realm of economics. As modern, industrial, technological, and urban societies the two nations have much in common. Both economies, for example, heavily depend upon a burgeoning service sector. In the UK services account for 67% of gross domestic product (GDP) and 76% of the work force. In the US the figures are strikingly similar with 71% of GDP and 77% of the work force devoted to the service economy. Agriculture accounts for approximately 2% of GDP in both countries, and industry constitutes 30% of GDP in the UK and 26% in the US (Europa World Yearbook, 1995). In recent decades, a prominent feature of both economies has been the relative decline in the industrial economic sector of the two nations and the expansion and development of their respective service economies.

Traditional economic ties between the UK and the US continue to endure. After France, the United States represents the UK's second largest trading partner for imports and behind Germany, the UK's second largest trading partner for exports. In 1992, America spent over $20 billion importing goods from the United Kingdom, and behind Japan, Canada, Mexico, and Germany, the UK constitutes the United State's fifth largest trading partner for exports. In terms of direct US involvement abroad, the United Kingdom far surpasses any country in the world. Last year, US direct investment in the UK amounted to a staggering $102 billion, almost one sixth of America's entire global investment (Europa World Yearbook, 1995; World Book Encyclopedia, 1994). Consequently, despite Britain's close economic links with countries in the European Community and the Commonwealth, and despite America's expanding business interests in North America and Asia, trade and investment between the US and the UK continue to represent a significant economic force.

The United States and the United Kingdom also share close cultural ties. Commonalties in language and media technology allow TV, film, music, and literature easily to be exchanged across the Atlantic. A significant proportion of popular music, television programming, and movie production typically enjoy almost simultaneous transmission in both countries. Tourism indicators further suggest a mutual fascination with each other's country. In 1993, more people visited the UK from America than from any other nation in the world and, outside North America, only Japan sends more tourists to the United States than Britain. Astonishingly, in 1994, out of a British population of fewer than 60 million people, over three million British tourists visited the US. (Europa World Yearbook, 1995). Both countries also boast highly developed telecommunications and transportation networks and London and New York represent two of the foremost financial, trading, and commercial centers in the world.

As a result of rapid industrialization in the nineteenth century, the people of the UK and the US principally reside in urban areas. In both countries, the Christian religion and people of white ethnicity continue to predominate. However, in both the United States and the United Kingdom, urban centers increasingly enjoy multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious communities. The United States is renowned for its diverse and culturally rich population. Similarly, as a result of post colonial policy following World War II, Britain comprises of people from all corners of the globe. For example, nearly two million British residents originate from India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, over a million Muslims live in Britain, and, in 1995, "Mohammed" appeared as the most common first name for a newborn boy born in England. (Central Office of Information, 1994). Arguably, New York and London feature the most diverse and cosmopolitan populations of any city in the contemporary world.

Despite their many similarities, vast differences between the United States and the United Kingdom do exist. The most striking difference is manifest in the respective size and population of the two nations. The UK, with an area of 94,251 square miles, is dwarfed by the US which boasts a land area of 3,679,192 square miles. The United States is almost 40 times the size of the UK and the entire United Kingdom comfortably would fit into the state of Oregon (New Encyclopedia Britannica, 1993; Reddy, 1994).

Today, Britain's population hovers around 58 million people in comparison to the population of the United States which approximates 264 million. At 619 people per square mile, Britain's average population density far exceeds that of the US which stands at 72 people per square mile. Both countries have predominantly urban populations with 75% of Americans and 92% of British citizens living in urban areas. The United States has 24 cities with populations in excess of 500,000 people, in the UK only five cities can lay claim to that status. London, with a population of nearly seven million, is by far Britain's largest city. Significantly, however, Britain's population growth is among the slowest in the world and the city of London gradually has declined from a pre World War II population of eight and a half million people (Central Office of Information, 1994).

In terms of world status, the two countries almost have exchanged places during the twentieth century. In the nineteenth century, the UK founded the largest empire in history, boasted the world's greatest navy, and enjoyed the fruits of becoming the world's first industrial nation. However, the break up of the empire, two crippling World Wars, and a declining industrial economy severely weakened the United Kingdom. Today, more than 70 countries are larger than the UK and although Britain maintains a respectable status in the world Britain no longer is the world power it once was (Dimbleby and Reynolds, 1988).

Whereas Britain may be described as a "middle sized, middle ranking industrial country," the United States arguably is the world's supreme economic, military, and political power (New Encyclopedia Britannica, 1993, p. 13). Although, the United States is the third largest country in world population, no other country equals the US in the production of trades and services. America is the most important single factor in world trade by virtue of the sheer size of its economy. Its exports represent more than 10% of the world total. Overall, the United States represents the world's greatest economic power measured in terms of gross national product (GNP) and is among the greatest in terms of GNP per capita. Today, American citizens enjoy one of the highest standards of living on the planet (The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 1993).

In economic terms the US compares favorably with the UK. Many examples illustrate the economic gap between the two nations. In 1993, per capita GDP in the US amounted to $24,700 compared to $16,900 in the UK. Whereas unemployment in the UK stands at 9%, it is only 5% in the US. On the foreign exchange markets the strength of the dollar over the pound clearly is reflected in the fall of the British pound from $2.32 in 1980, to $1.7 in 1990, to $1.53 in 1996. In addition, during 1993, the average hourly wage for a US industrial worker stood at $16.73 in contrast to $12.76 in the UK. Most importantly, whereas the US economy has seen respectable growth and buoyancy in the 1990s, the British economy has been plagued by a deep and debilitating economic recession (Famighetti, 1995).

Despite some commonalties in background, therefore, the American and British students who participated in this study also originate from countries with very different cultural, historical, social, and economic experiences. Consequently, the varying perspectives of these teenagers offer the potential for raising important and pertinent questions. For example, how similar or different are the views of teenagers from these two different societies? To what extent does cultural upbringing affect views on employment and one's role within the economy? How much does education, upbringing, and environment impact student's personal employment aspirations, values and beliefs. And, to what extent does the interdependence of the contemporary world lead teenagers across the globe to share similar economic values and ideals?

Given their enormous actual and potential influence on national economies and the importance of their present and future contribution to global society, it is imperative that concerned adults and policy makers are more informed of the views, perceptions, beliefs, and values of the world's teenagers. A U. S. Department of Education study on youth trends asserts, "No subject is more susceptible to sensational treatment than the lives of adolescents. If we are to make wise choices about policies that affect them, we must be armed with reliable information" (U. S. Department of Education,

1988). This comparative study serves as a small window into the lives and minds of some of the world's teenagers. However, by focusing directly on the views of an identified group of teenagers in the United Kingdom and the United States, this study offers a richer and more complex understanding of teenage perceptions and the social, economic, and cultural forces which ultimately may have shaped them.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The study is based upon the responses of 68 high school students from the United States and 80 high school students from the United Kingdom. The students responded to a four-page questionnaire focusing on topics related to teenage views of the economy, their economic involvement within it, and their perceptions of economic issues such as employment and wealth. The questionnaire was divided into eight sections. The first section asked students to provide personal background information (e.g., How many people live in your home? How many brothers and sisters do you have?) Section two, on "family wealth," required students to identify, from a list, commodities they have in their family home (e.g., TV, VCR), to say how many rooms their home has, and to evaluate their family wealth on a scale from one to 10. Section three asked students a range of questions on their own "personal wealth." For example, "Do you receive an allowance? Do you work for extra money? List the three most valuable things you own." The fourth section focused on "family obligations." Students were asked whether or not they worked for their parents without pay and if so, for how many hours. In addition, students were asked to explain reasons why they should or should not work for their parents. Section five asked questions related to their aspirations in the "job market." The sixth section asked for students' "ideas on employment." Section seven asked students to define their perceptions of the strength of their national economy and to evaluate how important this was to them personally. The final section asked teenagers to consider possessions they would like to own in the future to make them "comfortable" and "happy" and to explain what being "rich and poor" meant to them.

This paper reports teenage responses focused on sections five ("entering the job market") and section six ("ideas on employment"). Specifically, students were asked:

(1) After you leave school will you most likely: Go to college? Get a job? Go into the armed forces? Other?
(2) How old do you think you will be when you enter full-time work?
(3) What type of job do you expect when you leave full time education?
(4) What type of job would you like? Why?
(5) What type of jobs do you think are considered highly paid in your country?

(6) What type of jobs do you think are considered highly valued in your country?

METHODOLOGY

Participating in this study were 148 high school students. The 68 American students were teenagers from a high school in Austin, Texas. The 80 British students attended a high school in the county of West Sussex in Southern England. Every student who participated in the study was 15-years-old.

In both countries the administration of the questionnaire was carried out by the students' regular classroom teacher and all responses were anonymous. To prohibit student interaction and to allow enough time for students to write their responses the teachers were asked not to assist students in the completion of the questionnaire.

The study aimed to procure responses from teenagers who were representative of the schools' student population for that year. Accordingly, in the sample drawn from the United States the participants were members of four social studies classes. In the British sample, the students were members of four mixed ability "tutorial groups." On the day the questionnaire was distributed, all students present in class participated. Although not every student responded to each question, every teenager in the sample responded in whole or part to elements of the questionnaire. To ensure that the study focused only on 15-year-olds some members of the class or tutor group (e.g., those aged 14 or 16) were later excluded from the study by the researchers.

Despite the obvious difficulty of drawing direct comparisons, the study attempted to identify schools representative of middle income society in both the United Kingdom and the United States. The American school from which the data was collected is situated in Austin, the capital of Texas. The school has approximately 1800 students of which 53% are Anglo, 38% Hispanic, and 9% Black. The school is one of eleven high schools in the city. Situated on the banks of the Colorado River the picturesque city has a population of 485,000. Austin is a rapidly expanding city incorporating high-tech industries, newly located corporate headquarters, and 120 state and 62 federal agencies. Austin is also home to the University of Texas and six other institutions of higher learning.

The teenagers from the UK study are from the county of West Sussex, a historic county in south-east England. West Sussex has an approximate population of 700,000 with its administrative center in the cathedral town of Chichester. The school participating in the study sits on the eastern edge of the county. The high school is for students aged 11 to 16 and it draws its

student population from many small towns and rural communities in the surrounding district. The school's enrollment hovers around 1,000 students from predominantly white middle class families. The students' parents typically work in the service sector. The school is situated only 50 miles from the heart of London and 10 miles from the coastal town of Brighton; many parents work in these two locations. Although the schools' community enjoys close access to the bustling tourist town of Brighton and the vibrant city of London, the school nestles in some of Britain's most attractive rural countryside. The area is considered one of England's more desirable places to live.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

The researchers recognize that the study has many of the empirical limitations commonly associated with comparative international studies. For example, the study is not based upon a random sample of subjects. Although the schools represented in the study may be considered typical of middle income society in the United States and the United Kingdom, their participation was, to some extent, based upon opportunity and the researchers' professional contacts. In addition, as with all comparative studies, the difficulty of attempting to compare similar experiences in two totally different contexts pervades. The extent to which the samples are representative of either culture and may be offered in international comparison is always open to question.

Despite such limitations this study offers an insight into the thoughts of teenagers from two different cultures. The study is exploratory in nature. It is an attempt to describe, analyze, and evaluate the employment aspirations and attitudes of teenagers from two very different social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Most importantly, the study offers a comparative international perspective on these issues in order that we may understand more fully the economic perceptions of teenagers and the socio-cultural forces which shape them.

THE STUDY

I: STUDENTS' GENERAL INTENTIONS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

Section five of the questionnaire, "entering the job market," asked students two specific questions:

(1) After you leave school will you most likely: Go to college? Get a job? Go into the armed forces? Other?
(2) How old do you think you will be when you enter full-time work?

Responses revealed a striking similarity between the intentions of students from both the United Kingdom and the United States. Each of the 148 students who participated in the study responded to the questions. From the sample of English students 84% stated that they intended to go college after high school. The number of those indicating a desire to pursue college among US sample appeared slightly higher at 88%. Some students revealed that they intended to "get a job" after high school. Among the British sample 14% stated this intention in comparison with 10% from the United States. Very few students believed that they would enter the armed forces after school. Indeed only 3 students, one from the US and two from the UK, thought a career in the armed forces likely.

When asked to estimate the age these teenagers believed that they would enter full-time work small, but significant, differences emerged. Among the US students 23.69 was the average anticipated age for entering full-time work. Indeed, many American teenagers believed that they would not begin full-time employment until their late twenties. In comparison, the average age of the UK sample was 21.32. Significantly whereas 24 of the 80 English teenagers thought that they would begin work before they were 20-years-old, only three US students thought this probable.

To some extent the discrepancy between students post high school intentions and the age they expect to begin a full-time occupation is explained by the definition of the term "college" in the two societies. The US sample, which revealed an average age of 23.69, accords very closely with the typical career path of a student who leaves high school aged 18 and then pursues a four-year college career. The students from the school in England, however, attend an 11-16 year-old high school. Once students have reached the compulsory school leaving age of 16, they may elect either to leave school or to go to a two-year "college." At aged 18 students who attended college then have to decide whether to go into full-time employment or to apply to further or higher education courses in a college or a university. Accordingly, some students from England who responded to the questionnaire may have written "attend college" as a choice with the intention of entering full-time employment aged 18. Also, the anticipated age discrepancy between the US and the English sample may further be explained by the fact that in most British universities degree courses require three years of study and not four as in the United States.

In many respects the English sample in this study is not representative of the typical profile of British teenagers. For whereas in the sample 84% believed that they would go to college after high school; in reality, in 1992, only 37% of British students leaving school aged 16 went on immediately to enjoy full time education. Furthermore, whereas only 14% of the study sample reasoned that they would obtain a job at the end of their compulsory education, in the country as a whole over 27% actually entered into full-time

work in 1991 (Central Office of Information, 1994). Likely, a significant majority of the teenagers in the study intend to go on to further education and attain a college or university degree. However, in Britain, in 1993, only 12% of the work force could claim a college or university degree as their highest educational qualification. Significantly, 28% of the British population had achieved no academic qualifications whatsoever (Central Statistics Office, 1995).

In terms of numbers in higher education Britain stands well behind the United States. In Britain in 1991, 18% of 18-21 year-olds attended a higher education institution. By comparison, in the United States over 36% of 18-21 are enrolled at a college or university. Today, the United States enjoys one of the world's highest rates for enrollment in higher education (Central Statistics Office, 1995). Apart from Belgium (31%) and France (27%), no other European economy has a participation rate in higher education above 25%. Indeed, the participation rate for the US (36%) is more than four times the rate in Denmark (8%).

Despite a shift in British educational policy and practice in recent decades, the reason for the comparatively low number of participants in British higher education has historical roots. The modern structure of pre-university education was set out in the 1944 Education Act. Under the Act children were examined at aged 11 (the so-called eleven plus), on the basis of which primarily they were assigned either to grammar schools, which prepared them for higher education, or to secondary modern schools, which they usually left at the minimum leaving age. Essentially, the system determined the shape of the work force. The vast majority of high school pupils left school at 16 and entered the work force with few qualifications. In contrast, a minority pursued academic studies at selected universities and colleges. Re-organization of high schools into comprehensive schools occurred in the 1960s and dramatically impacted the composition of the school population in most areas of the country. No longer were students enrolled on the basis of a competitive examination at eleven years of age. Still, the structure of modern British education past age 16 is embedded in the tradition which allocates places at universities and colleges to the few and expected early entry into the work force by the many.

In recent years, however, a clear shift has occurred in British further and higher education. That shift is reflected the numbers entering full time and may, to some extent, explain the choices of the English students in the study. Significantly, the proportion entering higher education in Britain has risen from 1 in 8 in 1980, to 1 in 4 in 1995, and is expected to soar to 1 in 3 by the year 2000 (Central Office of Information, 1994). In addition, between 1988 and 1993 the number of students at British universities increased by a dramatic 33%. Today, about 65% of pupils choose to continue in education after age sixteen. Importantly, concurrent with the drive to achieve a more qualified

citizenry is the shift in societal expectations. Increasingly people in Britain recognize the importance of educational qualifications above the high school level. The desire to enter into full time education expressed by students questioned in this study may therefore, may be explained by this fact. In sum, although the UK lags well behind the US in the numbers of students participating in higher education, the enormous gap between the two nations likely will close in the following years.

In contrast to the United Kingdom, the United States traditionally has enjoyed a broader and more inclusive college system. Attending college, particularly among the American middle and upper classes is considered a logical extension of a high school education. Unquestionably, the culture of college education in the United States permeates American society far more than it does in the United Kingdom.

American society places a high premium on a college education. As a result, college enrollment has continued to rise. Whereas in 1970, for example 23.8% of high school graduates completed at least one year of college, by 1992 that figure had soared to 42.3%. Today, almost 15 million Americans are enrolled at the university or college level with that number projected to rise in the opening decades of the twenty-first century (Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1994).

Consequently, although the US sample, of which 88% asserted that they would attend college after high school, represents a proportion significantly higher than the national average, their choice reflects an increasing trend in US society. Furthermore, given that the students participating in the study live in a university town and come from predominantly middle class families, their individual expectations hardly are surprising.

The reason why so many US students value a college education may largely stem from the explicit correlation between an individual's level of education and his or her economic and social status. In 1992, for example, an American citizen with less than a ninth grade education earned on average less than $14,000; a typical high school graduate earned about $29,000; someone with a bachelor's degree could enjoy $49,539; and individuals who advanced to a professional degree commanded an average income of $84,990 (Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1994). Moreover, one marketing research organization has calculated that on average, whereas lifetime earnings for a high school student approximate $1,400,000, for a college graduate it exceeds $2 million.

Unquestionably, in American society a good education reaps its rewards. In response to the question does education pay? Adrian Wooldridge in a comparative study of international education, asserts, "the answer is yes, education does pay. If virtue gets its reward in heaven, education gets its pay

off on earth. On almost every measure, education is a highly remunerative investment." Wooldridge continues,

> It is hardly surprising that the well educated have always been richer than the poorly educated. But the gap is getting bigger. In 1980, a college educated American ten years into his career earned 31% more than a contemporary who had finished only high school. By 1988, the earnings gap had yawned to 86%. Over the 1980s male college graduates saw their real incomes rise by 10%: high school graduates saw their incomes fall by 9% and high school drop-outs by 12%. College graduates will fulfill the American dream of earning more than their parents. The average high school drop out will not (1993, p. 4).

The experience in Britain is somewhat similar. For example, 70% of those with no formal academic qualification, slightly over a quarter of the British work force, are employed in low paying unskilled manual jobs. In contrast, those holding a degree (12% of the population) occupy 61% of the country's high paying professional jobs.

In both countries an individual's level of education often also is a determining factor underpinning who becomes unemployed. The longer you spend being educated the less likely you are to be without a job. In Britain in 1991, 10.4% of those who attended school to age 16 were unemployed, compared with 3.1% who attended university. Similarly, in the US, whereas 11.8% of those who left school at sixteen were unemployed, only 3.6% of the university educated met a similar fate (Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1994). Over the last few decades every economic downturn, in both the US and the UK, has forced a larger proportion of the uneducated into unemployment.

Increasingly, educators, business interests, and politicians have recognized the importance of establishing a highly skilled and sophisticated citizenry. In every advanced economy education has become a valuable asset. In both Britain and the United States, for example, globalization and automation greatly has impacted the national economy. Globalization has meant that many manual jobs requiring little education can be exported to poorer countries. Automation has meant that jobs that stay in rich countries are increasingly done by machines rather than by men and women. The result of these two trends has been a growing desire for "smarter" jobs and high-yielding occupations. Successful modern economies undoubtedly will be those who cultivate a students and workers who are flexible, creative, and highly educated (Wooldridge, 1993; Kincheloe, 1995).

The British government's response to these demands not only has been to expand higher education, but also to raise the status of vocational

education through a massive program of initiatives. The linchpin of these changes is the newly created National Vocational Qualification which is intended to run parallel to, and assume parity with, traditional academic qualifications. Furthermore, British educational policy has been designed to advance interest in courses and qualifications in technological and scientific areas.

Despite these changes, however, both the British and the American educational systems are geared toward academic qualifications. Neither society has successfully introduced measures to dramatically promote sound vocational education. Indeed, in both countries vocational education remains the poor relation with emphasis placed on training workers, often for mechanical tasks, rather than educating them for employment in an ever-changing, diverse, and sophisticated economy. Whether or not the British and the Americans can resolve this dilemma is open to conjecture.

The responses of the students in the study, therefore, reveal some interesting findings and raise some important questions. The most significant finding is that most of the participants intend to go to college and then expect to begin full-time employment during their early twenties. Overall, their intentions, although somewhat atypical of the total high school population in both countries, reflect the increasing tendency of students in the US and the UK to pursue further qualifications at the college or university level. Clues to the nature of their college education and to the careers that they subsequently expect to follow are partly revealed in the responses to the next sections on job expectations and "employment aspirations."

II: JOB EXPECTATIONS AND DESIRES

In order to further explore what motivates students to pursue a particular career or a certain occupation we asked the teenagers in our study:

(3) What type of job do you expect when you leave full time education?
(4) What type of job would you like? Why?

Significantly, almost without exception, teenagers from both the United States and the United Kingdom asserted that they expected to pursue careers which required a substantial measure of higher education. For example, popular choices from students living on both sides of the Atlantic were professions such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, and engineers. Only one student, from the English sample, expected to work in a job requiring a relatively low level of formal education. This person candidly remarked that he expected to be a "laborer or shelf-stacker." This revelation, however, was

very atypical of the two sample groups. Indeed, the vast majority expected to enter into careers and professions requiring a high level of education.

Reasonably, one might suspect that teenagers realize that a job requiring good qualifications almost always will result in a high salary commensurate with their academic endeavors. Interestingly, however, a sizable proportion of the students claimed that high earnings were not the most important factor motivating them to choose a particular occupation. This observation was borne out by students' responses to the questions: "What type of job would you like to do when you leave school? Why?"

From the US sample, only 16% of teenagers stated that they chose their desired occupation because of the money it paid. Among the English sample the figure was much lower, with only 6% claiming that money motivated their choice of career. Revealingly, occupational features such as the nature of the work, the quality of the work, and the work environment appeared much more important to students than considerations of pay. Typically, students in both countries commented, "I'd like a job where I get to meet people," "a job I enjoy," "I would love to work with young people," "a job where I get to do a variety of things and not just be stuck in an office," "a job that is interesting and rewarding." Unquestionably, the desire to "enjoy" work appeared far and above the biggest motivator toward a particular career.

Students from both countries displayed a desire to enter into a variety of occupations. In the English sample, for example, career choices appeared as diverse as a sculptor, a racing driver, an antique dealer, a chef, and a water bailiff. A similar breadth of choice existed among the American students sampled with selections including an actor, a wilderness park ranger, a musician, and an archaeologist. Despite the wide range of career options, however, some common occupations emerged as popular choices.

By far the most popular choice of career among the English sample were those who chose "teaching" or "working with children" as a profession. Almost 23% of the sample made this choice. Next in popularity was a career in architecture or design with 18% of the sample expressing this as a desirable occupation. The third most popular choice among the British sample was a career in medicine which was chosen by just under 10% of those surveyed. Other choices selected by at least three of the sample included, electrician, engineer, working in business, banker, mechanic, and a sports related career.

Analysis of the US sample revealed some significant differences. For example 24% of the American teenagers stated that they wished to follow a career in medicine. Next in popularity were careers in engineering, law, and business with each constituting slightly under 12% of the total choices made. In contrast to the British sample, only 8% of US teenagers expressed the desire to enter the teaching profession. In addition, whereas two or more students

in England stated that they expected to work as a hairdresser, an electrician, and a mechanic, no American teenager made mention of these occupations.

Undoubtedly, explanation of the career choices of the US and English students is complex and reflects the interplay of an amalgam of cultural, socio-economic, educational, and geographic factors. Further studies are needed fully to understand the impact of these factors. However, this study offers some tentative explanations.

In both the US and the UK, the students taking part in the sample live in areas known for their service economies. In neither country do the students come from areas known for their industrial, mining, or manufacturing base. Almost without exception, student choices reflect this geographical and environmental origin. No student in either the US or the UK expressed the desire to work exclusively in the industrial sector and no student intended to pursue a career in the agricultural sector. Reasonably, one may conclude that the predominance of the service sector in the two national economies and the geographic location of the students may have played a role in determining student career choices.

Explaining popular career choices is, however, problematic. The fact that almost a quarter of the English students sampled expressed a desire to teach, in comparison with only 8% in the US, is somewhat difficult to explain. Economic factors appear not to be the primary motivating force because average salaries for classroom teachers in the US and the UK are almost identical standing around $35,000 per annum. To some extent, British teachers may enjoy higher social status than their American counterparts. Teaching in the UK is a degree entry profession and because only 12% of the population hold degrees some social status is derived as a result. Firm deductions, however, remain difficult and open to question.

The survey revealed that a career in medicine was seen to be the most desired occupational option among the 15-year-old American students sampled. Two factors may explain the reason for this. First, the US has a much broader and more extensive private health care system than the UK. The ratio of physicians to persons in the US is 391 to 1; in the UK the ratio is much greater at 611 to 1 (Famighetti, 1995). Medical practitioners in the United States often enjoy better working conditions than their British counterparts and certainly assume a highly respectable social status. The second factor is purely economic. Put simply, American physicians and surgeons are extremely well paid in comparison with their British equivalents. For, whereas the average US physician earns an estimated $156,000 a year, in the UK, a physician approximates a salary of $60,000 a year (Central Statistics Office, 1995; Marable, 1995).

If economic factors, social status, and regional location go some way to explaining career choices, it is pertinent to ask what role, if any, does a school curriculum play in determining students' future occupations? Attributing cause to curriculum designs is a slippery proposition, However, some direct correlation between the school curriculum and student choices do appear to exist. This is particularly evident in the high proportion of English students (over 18%) who elected "designer" or "architect" as a future career. In 1988, through the Educational Reform Act, the British government introduced the National Curriculum for all children aged 5-16 in schools in England and Wales. Part of the requirement of the National Curriculum was the mandatory teaching of "technology" in secondary schools. As a consequence, schools throughout the country began the difficult task of establishing curriculum materials to meet the demands of the "new" subject. The school from which the sample of English students was taken appeared particularly successful in designing a course incorporating aspects of craft, deign, and technology. Accordingly, the selection of careers in design and architecture by many of the English students surveyed likely reflects the impact of the technology curriculum in the school.

The relationship between the school curriculum and the demands of the job market is a particularly interesting aspect of this study and throws into question important issues such as: Should schools prepare students for occupations deemed important by the government and the society at large? And, what type of education provides students with the opportunity to be most successful in the modern work force?

When one considers the gap between the careers students say they wish to follow and the economic projections for the jobs society most likely will need in the immediate future, a serious discrepancy exists. In many respects one may conclude that the schools are failing to engender in students career goals most beneficial either to the national economy or indeed for themselves as individuals.

A recent study by Malcolm Cohen (1995), a labor economist and author from the University of Minnesota, projected the occupations with the fastest anticipated job growth over the next ten years. Cohen's detailed and comprehensive study concluded that the following occupations were the nation's top ten for job growth and stability: (1) computer engineer (2) computer systems analyst (3) physical therapist (4) special education teacher (5) private detective (6) radiologic technologist (7) paralegal and legal assistant (8) pre-school and kindergarten teacher (9) entertainer (10) legal/medical secretary. A further study conducted by the US Bureau of the Census, in 1992, revealed many similar results. The top ten "fastest growing occupations" according to the Bureau were: (1) home health aides (2) human service workers (3) personal home care aides (4) computer engineers and scientists (5) systems analysts (6) physical and corrective therapy assistants (7) physical

therapists (8) paralegals (9) occupational therapists (10) electronic pagination systems workers (Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1994).

Significantly, despite the obvious demand for workers in certain occupations, the career choices of teenagers who responded to the study tended not to accord with these apparent needs. Apart from those expressing the desire to be "a teacher," or the one US student who wished to be "an actor," none of the career choices expressed by the British and American students were listed in the top ten projections in either Cohen's, or the Census Bureau's, survey of the labor market.

A glaring discrepancy, for example, appeared between on the one hand the choices that the British and US students made, and, on the other, the projected demand for computer engineers and scientists. Revealingly, no student in the study anticipated working directly in computer science or computer engineering. In many respects, due to the enormous emphasis that British and American governments have placed on computer literacy and computer technology in schools, this is a startling, and probably to many, an alarming finding. Unquestionably, in both the US and the UK, a commitment has been made to introduce computer technology into the schools. In England, for example, the average number of pupils per microcomputer in secondary schools was 13 in 1992. Two years later, in 1994, it stood at nine, and the figure continues to drop (Central Office of Information, 1995). Moreover, the British government has sought to promote greater computer awareness through programs of teacher training, providing grants for schools to purchase computers and CD-ROMS, and by exploring the potential for multi-media technology in the schools. In the US, a similar commitment has been placed on the infusion of computer and information technology in the schools. Indeed, President Clinton, in his State of the Union Address in January 1996, made a pledge to link every classroom in America to the internet by the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The extent to which these governmental drives for increased computer technology in the schools have succeeded is open to question. Certainly, this study of future student career choices suggests that teenagers' enthusiasm for a career in a job related to computer technology has not been ignited by experience in school. As a consequence, although no firm conclusions may drawn from this study, the results do suggest that if educational policy makers and economic planners wish to promote enthusiasm for computer learning in schools, greater attention to the attitudes of teenagers may reveal some fruitful results. In addition further studies may explain the reluctance of many students to pursue a career in the computer industry.

Returning to Cohen's study of the occupations anticipated to be in greatest demand between the present and the year 2005, further discrepancies between the country's economic needs and the choices of students are

apparent. For example, apart from "teaching" no student from either country mentioned an occupation listed in Cohen's top twenty. Indeed, at 34th "physician" or "surgeon" appeared as the highest ranking occupation chosen by any of the students with "lawyer," at a relatively low demand rate of 43rd, placed next.

The study illuminates therefore the apparent discrepancy between what careers teenagers anticipate pursuing and what occupations the national economy places heavy demands on. The British and American student experiences are remarkably similar in this regard and as such several important educational and economic questions result. For example, should schools be vigilant of the demands of the national economy and the job market and tailor instruction and curriculum accordingly? Should students, through vocational educational programs, be "trained" for targeted careers? And, if so, what is the most effective way of encouraging and affecting these changes in schools today?

Alternatively, however, the study may support a curriculum rationale which argues that, as the job market is so complex, so diverse, and so open to change, to focus curriculum specifically on areas in which labor shortages are projected is short sighted and imprudent. As a consequence, some might contend that a valid argument can still be made for a liberal arts curriculum which provides students ideally who are literate, numerate, articulate, flexible, creative, and thoughtful.

The intention of this study is not, of course, to finally resolve these burning educational and economic issues. However, what the study does illuminate is the discrepancy between students' career choices and the demands of the economy. In many respects, the choices of career made by students in the samples from both the UK and the US reflect a traditional pattern. Popular choices of career in teaching, law, medicine, and business suggests an enduring desire to enter into solid, well-established, professional occupations. The fifteen year-olds in the study likely will enter full-time occupation in the twenty-first century. According to their anticipated career choices, however many of them do not necessarily expect to work in high-tech and advanced technological industries. The extent to which this might pose a future problem for the British and American economy is open to conjecture. Regardless, the possibility suggests that a broader and deeper investigation into the employment attitudes, aspirations, and motivations of young people is worthy of serious and considerable attention.

III: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF JOBS WHICH ARE HIGHLY PAID AND HIGHLY VALUED

Section six of the questionnaire focused on "ideas on employment." This section intended to elicit a broader understanding of how students view

particular occupations. Specifically, the British and American teenagers were asked:

(5) What type of jobs do you think are considered highly paid in your country?
(6) What type of jobs do you think are considered highly valued in your country?

For both questions the students were asked to list three choices of occupation. Most students replied to the survey question. The 63 US students who responded made a total of 166 choices out of a possible 189. The 79 English students who responded made 232 choices out of a possible 237.

In response to the first question: What type of jobs do you think are highly paid in your country? great similarities existed between students from the two countries. In both the US and the UK, a career in medicine, law, or banking and business appeared in the top three student selections. According to the English students 85% saw law as the most financially rewarding profession, followed by medicine (77%) and business/banking (38%). In the US, medicine was perceived to be the most lucrative profession by every student (100%), followed by law (73%) and then a career in banking and business (20%). Other popular choices of high income occupations shared by both English and American teenagers were sports related careers, careers in the entertainment industry, and employment as a politician.

In many respects, the students' choices reflect an astute awareness of the explicit economic rewards of certain professions. For example, all the US teenagers who believed that medicine was a highly paid career were correct in their assumption. In the US, physicians and surgeons earn on average between $150,000 and $200,000 a year. Similarly, although, the average salary for a lawyer in the US approximates a respectable $58,000, top lawyers commonly command enormous incomes from their profession. Considering the average income of all workers in the US in 1993 stood at $24,076, student choices represent a keen understanding of the economic value of leading professions (Marable, 1995).

In the UK, the average incomes for medical practitioners and solicitors (lawyers) stand well above the national average. For example, according to Her Majesty's Central Statistics Office, in 1994, medical practitioners earned an average weekly wage of $1119 and solicitors $854. Although the gap between average salaries and the income of medical practitioners and lawyers is not as pronounced as in the US, these wages compare favorably with the average weekly wage for all full-time adult workers in the UK which approximates $489. The choices of students from both the US and the UK, therefore, exhibit a prudent understanding of which careers are highly rewarding.

That many of the students surveyed believed that entertainers and sports stars were highly paid is not surprising. With the emergence of satellite and cable television and the dramatic expansion of TV advertising, prominent entertainers and sports stars regularly enjoy exorbitant incomes. Furthermore, as the careers of these popular personalities often are followed with extreme interest by teenagers, it is understandable that many students are aware of their massive earnings. Undoubtedly, that 11% of US teenagers and 16% of UK teenagers reasoned careers in entertainment and in sports are among the most highly paid professions, is explained by this fact.

Many students sampled in both the US and the UK believed that careers in banking, business, finance, and insurance appeared lucrative. The difficulty of closely assessing these perceptions, however, lies in the enormous diversity of jobs within this segment of the economy. For example the earnings of a CEO of a major corporation cannot be compared to the income of a bank clerk. Nevertheless, in general terms, one could argue that the 20% of US students and the 38% of English students who believed that a job in the financial, business or banking sector was well paid made an informed choice. To support this argument according to government figures, the 11.6% of British workers who are employed in banking, finance, insurance, and business enjoy an average weekly income of $572 which compares favorably to the national weekly average of $489 (Central Statistics Office, 1995). The industry is well regarded in Britain with finance, banking, and insurance accounting for a larger proportion of the UK's GDP than any other industry.

In the US, America's leading 157 corporations employ over 9 million workers and boast assets in excess of $20,000 billion (Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1994). As a result, America's leading businessmen and women enjoy some of the nation's highest salaries. Employees, for example, who achieve an advanced business or professional degree can expect an average income of $84,990 a year. In addition, the average weekly wage of managerial and professional workers in 1993 was estimated at $791 a week or an annual income in excess of $41,000. As a consequence, despite the broad spectrum of earnings in this economic sector, students who reason that finance, business, and banking are highly paid professions typically appear correct in their assumptions.

In general, the choices made by the British and US sample strikingly were similar. However, in two employment areas differences surfaced. First, whereas eight of the 79 English students sampled believed that an "airline pilot" was a high paying profession, no US student made this selection. Significantly, however airline pilots are among America's highest paid workers. Indeed, in March 1995, *Money Magazine* listed airline pilots, who average an income of $99,700 after ten year's experience, at second place in a summary of America's five top paying jobs (Marable, 1995).

The second difference emerged with regard to opinions about the earnings of politicians. Among the British sample 32% of students believed that politicians were among the highest paid professions. In contrast, only 14% of US students listed "politician" as a job considered highly paid. Ironically, however, the complete opposite is the case. In relative terms, British politicians are poorly paid whereas their American counterparts command sizable salaries. A recent report, for example, conducted by the *London Times* revealed that British politicians are among the lowest paid in the industrial world and that in relative terms, John Major represented "the worst-paid Prime Minister for 150 years" (Williamson, 1995). In contrast, US politicians are far and above the world's highest earning elected representatives.

The contrast between politicians' pay in the US and the UK is very significant. John Major, for example, receives an annual income of $85,527. In contrast, President Clinton earns $200,000 in taxable income, $100,000 in non-taxable income for travel and a further $70,000 for entertainment and official duties. Whereas in Britain a cabinet minister earns $64,251 in the US he or she earns $148,400. The average Member of Parliament in Britain receives $50,700, in comparison with a US Congressman who receives $92,750. Significantly, although British politicians enjoy an income far above the national average, their salaries are modest in comparison to those in the US (Europa World Yearbook, 1995; Famighetti, 1995). To some extent, therefore, student responses reveal a limited appreciation of the financial rewards for professional politicians.

A variety of other choices were selected by students in the study. Among US students revealing choices of high paid professions included a professor, a drug dealer, and a real estate agent. In the UK bookmaker, builder, and model appeared among the selections. Interestingly, five of the 79 British students believed that "the Queen" held a job considered highly paid!

In sum, in analyzing student responses four overriding conclusions may be drawn. First, with few exceptions, teenagers in both the US and the UK consider similar professions to be highly paid with traditional occupations such as law, medicine, and business, featuring prominently. Second, in most cases, teenagers from both countries had an astute appreciation of what professions were financially rewarding. Third, almost without exception students realized that well paying professions were those which required a high level of education and training. Fourth, very few teenagers, despite growing evidence to the contrary, explicitly considered careers in technology, science, or computer related industries to be well paid enough to be included in their survey responses.

The final question analyzed by this study asked students to consider what type of jobs they believed were highly valued in their respective countries. Students were asked to list three.

Among the British sample doctors or surgeons appeared most frequently (selected by 68%) followed by policeman/woman (33%), and fireman/woman (32%). Fourth in order of choice was lawyer (29%); fifth appeared politician (25%) and sixth, nurse (23%).

Teenagers in the US sample also selected doctor or surgeon to be the profession that they believed was most highly valued in their country. Eighty percent of American students made this choice. The second highest choice was teacher (46%); third equal were politician and lawyer (both selected by 22% of the students).

Students from both countries selected doctor or surgeon as the most "highly valued" profession. This choice perhaps is not surprising and it reflects the values and beliefs of most people in societies across the world. Since 1925 studies have been conducted to assess occupational prestige as an indicator of status in society. The rankings of occupational prestige have been remarkably stable since the 1920s and in general are consistent across nations. Donald Trieman's (1977) study of occupational prestige in 57 countries places doctor or physician as the most prestigious occupation in all societies. On Trieman's international prestige scale "physician" is accorded the highest score of 77.9. This compares favorably with a middle ranking occupation such as "electrician" (score 44.5) and a job of low ranking prestige such as "street sweeper" (13.4).

Other similarities in choice appeared among the relatively significant numbers of students who saw lawyer and politician as highly valued professions. In the US sample 22% of students asserted that both lawyer and politician were well regarded. In the English sample 29% selected lawyer and 25% politician. Thus, despite the cynical impressions held by some towards these occupations, students appear to look favorably upon them. Again, this is consistent with studies in occupational prestige. Studies in the US, for example confirm that Senators and Congressmen are considered to be among the most prestigious occupations in America. Lawyers also enjoy a high prestige rating. Research in both the US and the UK accord lawyers a high prestige score of 75.7 and 77.1 in the two respective nations.

Although, on balance, great similarities emerged regarding the type of profession considered highly valued by the English and American teenagers, some differences did surface. The English students, for example, appeared to favor professions associated with the emergency services such as fire and police. Indeed, policeman/woman and fireman/woman was selected by 33% and 32% of the English students. In contrast only 16% of US teenagers

considered police to be a highly valued occupation and no US student selected fireman. Similarly, whereas 23% of the English sample chose nurse, no American student specifically selected nurse as a highly valued occupation.

The omission of nurse from the choices of the US students is somewhat surprising. According to Trieman's study of occupational prestige in the US, nurses enjoy a relatively high level of support among the American public and earn a prestige score of 61.5 which compares favorably with the international average of 53.6. In this regard, the choices of US students sample conflict with national perceptions. Among the British sample the choice of police as the second most highly valued occupation in Britain is particularly interesting. In international prestige scores and scores in the UK, police tend to rank in a relatively modest position (39.8 and 43.0 respectively). As a consequence, the English teenagers sampled in this study appear to place a higher value on police as an occupation than others in the country.

The status and value of teachers in the eyes of the teenagers sampled also is significant. In the US, despite teachers' fairly low income, they continue to enjoy a relatively high prestige ranking in national surveys (63.1) (Trieman, 1977, p. 295, p. 383). The choices of the American teenagers reflect this attitude. Indeed, 46% of US teens asserted that teaching was a highly valued occupation. Teachers appeared second only to physicians in this regard. Although, 15% of English students similarly believed teaching to be highly valued, support for the profession was much weaker. This is an interesting finding considering that the job English students expected most to do when they left full time occupation was teaching. Ironically, in contrast, teaching appeared much lower down on the list of occupational priorities for US students. In sum, although many British students intend to become teachers, they do not see the profession as particularly highly valued. In contrast, however, although the US teenagers sampled see teaching as highly valued, a significant majority have no intention of joining the profession.

Much valuable information also may be gained by considering what choices teenagers failed to make. For example, less than 10% of students from both countries reasoned that business or banking was a highly valued profession. Despite the fact that studies in Britain show farmers to be well regarded (prestige score 64.5), no student in either in the US or the UK samples mentioned farming as a highly valued occupation. Similarly, no choices were made from occupations associated with technology or manufacturing. Furthermore, teenagers omitted to make choices which recognized the value of manual or craft trades such as electricians, builders, plumbers, or carpenters.

In conclusion, therefore, the occupations selected by the teenagers in the study were broadly consistent across the two countries. To some extent most regarded professions such as doctor, lawyer, teacher, politician as highly

valued and to a large extent student choices reflected the wider views of citizens in the broader society. Significantly, student choices reflected a keen regard for traditional and established occupations which require a high level of education and/or training. Interestingly, therefore, although most of these fifteen year-olds will enter the work force in the twenty-first century, with regard to employment they cling to the opinions and values established over many generations.

CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Undoubtedly, students' career perceptions and choices are governed by an array of factors in which family attitudes, societal pressures, educational achievement, geographical location, economic opportunity, and national and cultural values each play a major role. Significantly, despite the enormous range of factors at play, the student samples from the US and the UK show considerable similarities.

In most cases the students surveyed anticipated entering higher education, starting work in their early twenties, and accepting a job particularly well regarded by society. In addition, perceptions of what jobs were highly paid and highly valued revealed a strong emphasis on established and traditional careers. Few students, from either the US or the UK, demonstrated a particular respect for high-tech jobs or a desire to enter into professions related to technology, industry, or manufacturing.

Interestingly, therefore, although the US and the UK boast sophisticated, technological, and modern economies, student choices, opinions, and perceptions reveal a lack of enthusiasm for employment in these economic areas. This study, of course, is exploratory in nature. Definitive conclusions are difficult to draw. Nevertheless, if the views of these English and American students are typical of other 15 year-olds in their respective societies, the findings have important implications. As the twenty-first century rapidly approaches one might reasonably argue that, by limiting their focus to traditional occupations, students will miss out on both the opportunities and the demands for highly educated workers in technological and scientific areas.

The absence of student commitment for this growing and important sector of the economy supports the tentative hypothesis that schools in both the UK and the US are failing to produce significant numbers of students eager to enter into occupations which demand highly skilled and technically literate workers. The relationship, therefore, between curriculum and employment is a particularly fascinating one and exposes the age old issue of the responsibility of public schools to the anticipated needs of the greater economy.

Tensions have always existed between those who, on the one hand, believe that the duty of schools is to provide workers for the specific needs of the economy, and, those who, on the other hand, believe that the purpose of the school is to assist the personal, intellectual, moral, and aesthetic growth of the individual. The purpose of this study is not to resolve these burning issues, but to suggest that by paying attention to the aspirations and perceptions of teenagers, educators, policy makers, business interests, and politicians may make crucial decisions which affect young people in a more sensitive, thoughtful, and effective manner. Unquestionably, further studies which pay direct attention to the views of teenagers will better inform our understanding of the delicate relationship between the school curriculum, the views of teenagers, and the effectiveness of national and international economies.

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